

am.
Misc.

Mrs. Charles Starbuck
with the writer's kind regards

THE 025.62 1657

MISSIONARY PROBLEM.

A REPLY

To "Missionary Theology," an Article by the REV. EDWARD WHITE,
published in the "Rainbow" of July 1, 1869.

BY

F. S. TURNER, B.A.,
MISSIONARY OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

MISSIONARY RESEARCH
LIBRARY
NEW YORK CITY

U M O C U L U E S

LONDON:
HODDER AND STOUGHTON,
27, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1870.

THE
MISSIONARY PROBLEM.

A REPLY

*To "Missionary Theology," an Article by the REV. EDWARD WHITE,
published in the "Rainbow" of July 1, 1869.*

BY

F. S. TURNER, B.A.,

MISSIONARY OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.



LONDON:
HODDER AND STOUGHTON,
27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

—
1870.

THE MISSIONARY PROBLEM.

TO THE REV. EDWARD WHITE,

Minister of St. Paul's Chapel, Hawley Road, Kentish Town.

MY DEAR SIR,

Querulousness, if sometimes excusable, is never agreeable to its auditors. The noblest cause perpetually advocated in a tone of hopeless upbraiding, becomes distasteful. Men dislike to be urged, to save their own souls, in a pitifully complaining tone, still more the souls of other people. It is probable that, on this account, the foreign missions of our churches have become an unwelcome theme to many excellent persons, who know, by painful experience, the charges of neglect which will surely be brought against themselves, and that with more justice than forcibleness. Beyond all question, the foreign mission *has* a right to demand a far larger proportion of the thoughts and prayers, the gifts and services of Christians, than it has hitherto received. But what use is it to reiterate this? I fear the case has been pleaded almost *ad nauseam*; and that the wearied hearers, under a veil of decorous attention, are secretly steeling their hearts against our most pathetic appeals.

It is therefore quite an enlivening change, to pass from the position of accuser to that of defendant. To have our principles and our methods boldly challenged, is an experience as novel as it is welcome. Keen criticism, though one may wince under the operation, is more healthful treatment than

patronising neglect. It is a new and encouraging sign to see ministers, who occupy a well-merited eminence in the home-churches, applying their acumen to a critical survey of the foreign work. For a long time, missions have been going on, like a railway train after steam is shut off, by the unexhausted impetus of the mighty effort by which our forefathers set them in motion. They seem to have got into a groove, along which they have run pretty smoothly ever since, though some of us fear, the velocity is gradually slackening. But most friends of the undertaking seem so well satisfied with this groove, and the progress made therein, that they have no care beyond the raising of the necessary supplies. Self-complacency, however, though a comfortable, is also a dangerous condition, for enterprises, as well as for individuals. No enterprise can prosper, which is carried on in a mere routine. Unless kept alive by perpetual freshness of thought, it will slowly stiffen to stagnation. Yet, until recently, who *thought* about missions? The directors and secretaries of our great societies? No doubt these gentlemen, on whom falls "the care of all the churches" over a region wider than St. Paul ever dreamed of, must have spent many an anxious thought about the important business committed to their charge—the collection of funds, the selection of missionaries, the supply of the wants of the stations, and a multifarious list of affairs besides. In the midst of all this needful and pressing business, one could hardly expect them to find leisure for a philosophical study of the principles of missions. The missionaries? We, of course, do think a little, in the breathing spaces of our arduous toil: but as you have remarked, "few men of the first class offer themselves for missionary work." I suppose therefore the missionaries have not thought out any conclusions; or, knowing the slight esteem in which they are held, have not ventured to express them. The public? Setting aside the indifferent, the public seems divided into blindly devoted friends, and blindly prejudiced foes of missions. The latter contemptuously assert that missions are "all humbug," and deride all connected with the work, as either impostors or dupes. But if they venture to utter a sentence or two, beyond this general abuse, it soon appears that they are as ignorant of the actual facts

of missionary work, as they are of the living spirit of Christianity. Instinct teaches the believer that, in the root of things, missions and Christianity are one, and must live or die together. The very misty conception he has of the real state of the work, does not impair his hearty allegiance to the cause. He is content to trust that those who are officially responsible, see the whole thing in a far clearer light than he does himself; and so leaves it in their hands. Neither friend nor foe has seemed eager for the labour of a thorough examination into the whole facts of the case. There are indications, however, that the churches are awakening to a sense of the transcending importance of the foreign mission; and also to a suspicion that, perhaps, the problem is not yet quite mastered. Your able and courageous paper, "Missionary Theology," is one of these. Viewed as an effort to arouse the slumbering attention of the churches, as well as being in itself a valuable contribution to the study of the subject, it deserves grateful acknowledgments from us all; and I beg to send you mine from the shores of far Cathay.

When, however, "men of the first class" begin to address themselves earnestly to the study of a very complex problem, with the data of which they are not familiar, it is not surprising that they occasionally fall into mistakes, which lesser men, having a practical knowledge of the subject, can easily correct. Pardon my bluntness for saying, that your curious notion about the antiquated theology of missionaries, was one of these errors of genius. Your own pamphlet betrays your regret, that the churches of to-day have not moved quite so far from the stand-point of our great-grandfathers, as you in your heart desire. Theology is now in a transition state. A few leading minds have advanced to higher ground. Others are striking their tents. But the great bulk of the people still linger on the old camping-ground. It is not that missionaries represent the past, and you the present. Rather is it that we, taken as a body, fairly represent the present theology: you ante-date that of a coming age. One cannot blame your regret, that we are not found in the vanguard of progress; but the notion that we are theological Rip Van Winkles, can only have been evolved by the "free play of your consciousness" ignoring the facts.

Your subsequent letters to the *Independent* so satisfactorily explain away all that seemed offensive in your charges against missionaries, that I should not allude to them here, but for a very startling proposal to which they lead. As the missionaries are discovered not to possess a differentiating theology, you demand of the directors of our society, that they should supply the lack, by drawing up a symbol of faith for us. You say,

“I wish the question cleared up by the directors of Missionary Societies, what they do expect to be believed and taught respecting hell, and the idolaters, who have either gone, or are going there.”

No doubt, it would be very interesting to know “what are the present doctrines of the Missionary Societies on these topics, or whether they have none at all.” The Church of England, Wesleyan, Presbyterian, and other societies, have the advantage of being able to refer to the recognized standards of their respective churches. The Baptists and Independents are destitute of any authoritative confession of faith, and if only the missionary boards could be induced to give formal expression to their belief, at least it would present something definite for reformers to assail. But it is more likely, that the directors will be discreetly deaf to your appeal; so that it is premature at present to inquire, whether you “do expect” the missionaries of these societies to abide by the decision of the directors on matters of doctrine. In the meantime some of us can still imitate Bishop Watson, who avowed, “I am of mine own opinion.”

Having disposed of preliminaries in this introduction, I will divide what I have to say in reply to your letter, in the usual style of a sermon, under three heads and a conclusion. And first, let me remark upon

The very grave accusation you bring against us, of having misled the public into too favourable an opinion of the results of our labours. I quote your own words:

“Public opinion has begun to form itself under other influences than missionary reports, and missionary speeches. These tell but a portion of the truth. That which is favourable is generally published. That which is unfavourable is withheld.”

Our Chinese proverb says, "Bitter reproof is wholesome physic." Your censure is unpalatable enough; but must we admit that this witness is true? The copious correspondence in the *Independent*, from July 22 to Sep. 2, contains not an allusion to the charge. Could not Mr. Muirhead, or Mr. Hay, have noticed it so far, as to utter a few words of indignant denial? Was it beneath the dignity of our secretaries to repudiate the accusation? Unless the defendant put in an appearance, there is danger lest the public should allow judgment to go against us by default. You will excuse me for saying that these four or five lines were the really important part of your letter. The question what theology we teach, is not so urgent as the question whether we bear true witness to the facts that come under our observation. Is it, or is it not, that there is a prevailing misconception at home of the facts of the case? And assuming this to be true, is it to be attributed to missionary misrepresentation or reticence? I wish indeed that this question were "cleared up by the directors of missionary societies," for nothing touches so nearly our personal honour, and the prosperity of our work. For my own part, though I am sure nothing can have been farther from the *intention* of the witnesses than to mislead, I cannot pick up the gauntlet you have thrown down. It was evident to me, when last in England, that a false impression had been produced, as the total result of the various missionary information laid before the public. This may be ascribed in part to the *misinterpretation* of the statements of missionaries, but I fear also, it is partly owing to a prevalent *onesidedness* of those statements. But unjustifiable and mischievous as this onesidedness is, the blame of it must be at least equally shared by the religious public, and the missionary advocates. If the directors put forth onesided reports, and the missionaries deliver onesided speeches, it is in response to a pressure of public sentiment, well nigh irresistible. The root and cause of it is, that "stock" notion about the missionary work, which obtains among its supporters, that it necessarily is, and always must be, riding triumphantly on the high-tide of success. To doubt this, they think, would be to cast a reflection upon Christianity itself. If one dared to tell a plain tale of almost hopeless toil in the face of difficulties apparently in-

surmountable, uncheered by any prospect of approaching success, the hearer looked askance at him, as though he might be a secret traitor to the cause, or perhaps a Jesuit in disguise. What else can follow from this state of public feeling, but that the missionary should depict, in the brightest possible colours, the more hopeful side of his work, and touch as lightly as possible on its more gloomy aspect? Demand produces supply. Make it felt that missionary speeches are intolerable, unless they are entertaining and encouraging, and the missionaries will do the very utmost their consciences will allow to make them so. Poor missionaries! I know, from personal experience, how painful is the struggle to be honest; how strong the temptation to put just a streak or two of rosy dawn into a picture, which otherwise would be considered repulsively gloomy. My late visit to England left the impression, burnt deep into my heart, that *the ministers and people did not want to know the truth about missions*. I do not remember, during a stay of more than a twelvemonth, to have encountered any one bent on finding out as much as he could of the real facts of the case. On the other hand, I met frequently with direct requests for a onesided report. Privately it was whispered, "Give a *good* account of your work; our people don't like to be discouraged." Publicly, in presence of a gathering of friends and supporters, the chairman would say, "Mr. Turner will now give an account of *the success of the Gospel* in China." Oh those missionary meetings! One need have a martyr-like sincerity, indeed, to tell, not one truth only, but the whole truth, against the full current of the sympathies and expectations of chairman, local orators, and audience combined. Yes: if onesidedness is a just charge against missionary speeches, the fault is less that of the missionary, who would gladly tell the whole truth, than that of the public, which is unwilling to hear more than half.

Granting the existence of this evil habit of exalting into undue prominence every favourable symptom, and preserving a cautious reserve as to the less encouraging side of missionary work, the phenomenon is certainly a remarkable one, and one cannot but desire to track it to its source. The pelting storm of satire, which beat upon the very cradle of missions, may perhaps be partly responsible for it. The friends of the

enterprise were placed, from the first, in a defensive attitude. After enduring years of unmerited ridicule, it was natural that they should try to turn the tables on the sceptics, when the first gleams of a brighter day enabled them to boast of coming triumphs. Then came the striking successes in the Pacific, which whetted the appetite of our public for victories, and made them impatient under tidings of a different character, from the far more serious battle-fields of India and China. Worst of all, a notion somehow got abroad, that people who subscribe to missionary societies have a kind of right to expect "results" for their money. They pay their guinea annually; among them, they subscribe many thousands, even tens of thousands of pounds, and that for the spiritual welfare of dark-skinned multitudes, whom they have never seen; and they feel they have a claim on God Almighty for some visible return. The notion is so absurd, and even impious, that I am ashamed to cite it. Yet its extreme prevalence, and the hold it has got upon the public mind, may be inferred from the surprising fact, that there is a kind of reflex echo of it in your own high-toned paper. You point out that the decline of interest in missions is owing to failure of spiritual results, in a manner which implies that it is quite excusable, if not reasonable, to feel less interest in missions on account of such failure. *Ergo*, the supporters of missions had a right to expect spiritual results, as a return for so much effort and such liberal subscriptions. Of course this mode of looking at the matter must influence the advocacy of missions, not a little. There are men who believe in missions with all their heart and soul; but they do not believe in the public, and if they perceive the public will not contribute the needed funds, unless stimulated by accounts of success, they will blazon forth their successes with blare of trumpet, and will not talk about their failures, unless they are pressed. This is sad: but it is human nature.

It is one thing to extenuate, another to defend. Some other advocate must be found for the latter. To me, the slightest disguise of the real facts, appears as certainly bad policy, as it is dishonest to truth. The natural tendency of this constantly triumphant tone, is to hinder nobler natures from offering themselves for a service, which seems to prosper

so well without them ; and to discourage any search for improved methods, when the present system is so abundantly flourishing. What secret damage it has already done to the spiritual power of missions, only God can know. There is danger, too, that the public will suddenly revolt to a scepticism, as uninquiring as their present confidence, and so expose our societies to a perilous crisis. But inasmuch as the fault has never been deliberate and intentional, it may reasonably be hoped that your firmness, in dragging it into this painful publicity, will work an effectual cure, before it is too late.

II.

Have our efforts to convert the Chinese resulted in failure ? Before replying to this grave question, I wish to guard against abuse of the conclusion we may come to, by premising two important considerations.

Failure does not of itself justify condemnation of the means employed. To condemn the societies or the missionaries on account of failure, assumes the certainty of success upon the right use of means, and of success within a limited time. But this assumption is without warrant, either of reason or Scripture. *Magna est veritas*, etc., of course : but he is a poor student of history who counts upon victory in every battle. He were wiser to try to learn the courage which knows not when it is defeated. Every one, who has deeply pondered the history and fate of the Jewish nation, knows that even Divinely revealed truth may result in what, to human eyes, is signal and final failure. The history of eighteen centuries of the Gospel dispensation is abundantly fraught with the same sad lesson. To infer, therefore, from missionary failure, that there is surely something wrong about missionary theology, or missionary management, is not philosophical. I admit that it is reasonable to hope for success, and that its protracted delay justifies, nay, imperatively requires, the strictest examination of the means employed. But to pronounce a hasty condemnation, on the ground of the little visible good result, is to be guilty of false reasoning. Only God knows whether China can be converted

at all. Only He can estimate the length of time, and the amount of spiritual force needed, to accomplish its conversion. Blame us then for defects you can point out. I doubt not we have plenty. But do not conclude there must be something wrong in us, merely on the ground of our failure.

Neither can failure justify decline of interest in the work. If you were partner in a company, established for the introduction of the cultivation of the tea-plant into England, the failure of successive years would naturally damp your ardour, in a costly and unpromising undertaking. Unthinking persons regard our work in a similar way. The experiment of propagating Christianity in China, having been now carried on for a good while, without the plant seeming to take kindly to the new soil, they begin to weary of the affair, and to suspect that they may have embarked on a losing speculation. This feeling is based upon the absurdly unphilosophical notion, that Christianity is the natural religion for an Englishman ; but that its extension beyond its present limits, is of doubtful expediency. Those who entertain it, give indeed, an aesthetic preference to Christianity ; but they have no real faith in its Divine origin and authority. *We*, however, do not regard missions as an experiment, to be justified by success. They subsist by an internal necessity of the Christian faith altogether indifferent to any calculation of consequences. Our commission is Ezekiel's : to preach to the nations "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." Our motive is Paul's : "Necessity is laid upon me. Yea. Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."

Let us now undertake a candid examination of the question. Has our Protestant Mission to China proved a failure ? The facts of the case are briefly these. Sixty-two years ago, Robert Morrison commenced the mission. Since then more than 300 missionaries have followed in his steps ; of whom about 150 are now labouring here. During the first generation, in China itself but little actual mission-work could be done. The few missionaries were employed in studying the language, translating the Bible, preparing books, and preaching to the Chinese dispersed over the archipelago. In 1844 the opening of the five ports inaugurated active work in China. For a quarter of a century, a large number (averag-

ing, I think, not far short of a hundred) of missionaries, have been ceaselessly preaching and teaching, among the dense populations of the treaty ports, and within a considerable radius around them. The Elgin treaty nominally threw open the whole country to us, and actually widened our sphere of operations considerably. The visible result of all this labour, of so many Christian ministers, during 25 years, extending over so vast an area, is, that we now number between 5,000 and 6,000 Chinese Protestant Christians. The real results only the Searcher of hearts can enumerate. It is natural to suppose, that where there are avowed there are also secret believers: and that there is a considerable diffusion of knowledge, which has not ripened into faith, but is nevertheless a clear gain, because it paves the way for future success. But, if we are to reason upon results at all, we must reason upon the basis of the known, not upon the unknown. I have not raised this question of success or failure, and, for myself, could be well content to "walk by faith, and not by sight." But, if we are to discuss this matter, to any good purpose, it will not do to draw largely upon this supposed fund of hidden successes. We are told by Mr. W. P. Lyon, in the *Independent*, August 5th, that, here in China, "Christianity is making rapid progress through the labours of the converts themselves, and that Christian ideas are rapidly leavening great heaps of the population. It is, perhaps, not too sanguine a hope to give expression to, that China by the close of the present century will be, to a large extent, a Christian country." I would that Mr. Lyon had given his authority for these statements. God *can* open windows in heaven, and, if He pleases, all that Mr. L. predicts may be accomplished before A.D. 1900. But I am sure, there is not a sober-minded missionary in China, who will not reject his representation of the present facts. Christianity is not making *rapid* progress in China; but progress indubitably *slow*. What progress is being made, is due in very small degree to the independent efforts of the converts, mainly to the foreign missionaries, and their paid assistants. These, I am persuaded, are the assertions the missionaries would almost to a man support. The third assertion, that Christianity is rapidly leavening great heaps of the population, will also be

generally regarded as extravagant in the extreme ; though, as it is an assertion about the invisible, it may not be easily disproved. The first two, however, are statements of fact. If, to have gathered less than 6,000 converts, by the labours of sixty years, be rapid progress, we have made rapid progress. The character of the converts, I shall speak of by-and-by ; but even supposing them all that Mr. Lyon imagines them to be, there yet remains the fact, that they are not 6,000 in number : and the question before us is, is this result to be regarded as success, or as failure ?

What we have achieved looks small. An enemy can easily represent our enterprise as a complete failure. But to a disappointed friend we may say, does your disappointment arise from the absolute barrenness of our husbandry, or from its harvest falling short of your expectations ? If the latter, then it is possible that the error lay in those expectations having been raised too high. No completely decisive victory has been won by Christianity in any age, or any land. Partial success is the best that can be predicated of its highest developments. The first thing to be ascertained is, what result might reasonably have been looked for, from the means employed, all the circumstances of the case being taken into account. And since only Omniscience is able to perfectly estimate all the conditions of such a complicated problem, the probability is, that the more you weigh the matter in your mind, the more reluctant you will be to pronounce a decision.

There is a more important question than the number of our converts. What is their quality ? Have they spiritual life, and expansive power, among them ? Will they, though so few, increase, and multiply, and replenish the land ? Remember, Christianity is not now, for the first time, introduced into China. Whilst our Anglo-Saxon forefathers were still worshipping Odin and Thor, Christian missionaries found their way over the mountains of central Asia, to promulgate the Gospel, in the land of Sinim. For centuries, the good work was carried on, and it appears in Marco Polo's time, to have been in a flourishing state. Our knowledge of that Nestorian mission is too meagre, for us to pronounce an opinion, as to the causes of its decline. We cannot doubt, however, that it perished chiefly from lack of internal vitality.

The last lingering sparks, of this earliest Chinese Christianity, can not have been long quenched in darkness, before Roman Catholic Christianity appeared upon the stage. Six hundred years ago, the missionaries of that mighty church, began their labours in China. Nearly three hundred years ago, the celebrated Jesuit mission, made a new commencement of the work. This Roman Catholic mission has been, in our local newspapers, frequently extolled, to the disparagement of our more prosaic Protestant effort. Its history is, in truth, a deeply interesting one. Great names appear on the list of its missionaries. It has basked under the sunshine of imperial favour, and braved the pitiless storms of persecution; and added fresh recruits to the noble army of martyrs. Venturing far into the interior, identifying themselves more closely with the people, the Roman Catholic missionaries seem, in some respects, to put their Protestant rivals to the blush. But, when all honour has been paid to their zeal and devotedness, what is the result of this second long-sustained effort to evangelise the vast population of China? Their half-million or million converts, are a great host, compared to the little company of Protestant believers; but they are an insignificant, almost unappreciable, minority, of the untold millions of this immense empire. Moreover we must not overlook the fact that their mission is centuries old, while ours is comparatively but of yesterday. I do not think it is Protestant prejudice which leads me to the conclusion, that in this attempt to convert China, Roman Catholicism has been tried in the balances, and found wanting. Three centuries of primitive Christianity sufficed to overthrow paganism in the old Roman world. Six centuries of Roman Catholic effort leave China to-day, pretty much as its earliest missionaries found her. Converts have been gained in considerable numbers; some of them have kept steadfast through bitter persecutions, but their Christianity seems to lack vital force, and self-propagating energy. There is no sign that from them will arise the regeneration of China. One must, at any rate, admire the indomitable perseverance of the Roman propaganda. I do not know whether they ever ask themselves the question, have we failed? but at least, one can detect no symptom of flagging zeal. At this very time, they are erect-

ing, in Canton, a vast cathedral of solid granite, which bids fair, to last for ages, and perhaps, will overshadow the provincial city a thousand years hence, and be thronged with worshippers, when Buddha's temples have utterly perished, and the name of Confucius is almost forgotten. But if so, I think a simpler worship and a purer faith than theirs, will abide within its walls.

As regards our Protestant mission, it is almost too young to have a history, and it would be premature to pass any positive opinion as to its failure or success. But, if we are to form any conjecture from the present aspect of affairs, we must not attach so much importance to the numbers, as to the quality, of our converts. Will they manifest a vital expansive energy, able to leaven this enormous mass of heathenism? It is over early to say much about this yet. Some few of our converts have manifested strong faith and ardent zeal. But from what I have witnessed myself, and heard from my brother-missionaries of other provinces, I conclude, these instances are the exception. The Gospel net brings in bad as well as good; and if analogy leads us to believe there are secret believers outside our 5,000 converts, so, on the same principle, we must suspect there are to be found Ananiases and Demases among them. This cannot well but be; for a good deal of money is spent, one way or other, in connection with the missions; and wherever the clink of dollars is heard, needy and unscrupulous Chinese will flock like vultures to the carcase. The hope of being put in some office, about the mission, where he may eat a piece of bread, is quite inducement enough to make a hungry and threadbare scholar, who has failed at the examinations, turn his attention to Christianity. It is probable, however, that there are very few of this hypocritical class among us; for "the burnt child dreads the fire," and the detection of a good many such cases has made the missionaries extremely suspicious. I think that native agency is still pushed forward too eagerly; but if so, one cannot deny that, on the other hand, even excessive caution is displayed, lest insincere professors should creep into the church. The hypocrite, moreover, if he does intrude himself among us, has seldom the wit to wear the mask long and is sooner or later expelled. We may, with tolerable

safety, conclude that the proportion of persons absolutely destitute of true religion, is quite insignificant; but, at the same time, those manifesting a high degree of godliness, are also few. I speak from personal acquaintance only, with the Chinese Christians of the south of China; but I have met with missionaries from Amoy, Shanghai, Hankow, and other places, and I believe they would all endorse this opinion. The majority of our converts are not burning and shining lights: they are in a low stage of Christian development, both in knowledge, faith, and good works. With some exceptions, they are feeble Christians. They lean upon the stronger character of the missionary, and are as yet unable to walk alone. Some of them have borne steadfastly the test of persecution, and the genuineness of their faith is thus placed beyond reasonable doubt. Some have manifested considerable zeal for the progress of the Gospel. But these cases are a selection only. The majority are not eminent for personal piety, nor for missionary fervour. It can hardly be questioned, that the foreign missionaries are, at present, the mainstay of the work. They either do themselves, or set and keep a-going, the far larger proportion of missionary work. If they were removed at this period one could not, humanly speaking, expect that the results of their labours would long survive. But another generation or two may see a sturdier, more robust race of native Christians grow up; and upon this, I think, depends our hope for China, if we place it in anything below the sun. Will these converts always continue to sit at our feet, the captives of our sword and our bow? or will they learn to bear armour themselves, and go out manfully to the holy war? Will they begin to search the Scriptures for themselves, or continue always to regard the dictum of the foreign teacher as an oracle? Will they take the propagation of the Gospel into their own hands, or always look to have everything planned by foreign thought, and supported by foreign money? If they do not grow to this higher development, then our mission may disappear like a deceitful brook, as did the Nestorian; or, it may be sustained in a lingering existence by foreign importations, like the Roman Catholic; but no conversion of the nation can be looked for from it. Of this, however, our children and grandchildren will be in a fitter

position to judge than we are. Some hopeful signs I see in various quarters ; but the time for triumphing, even in anticipation, has not come yet.

In the above remarks success and failure have been before our minds, viewed in connection with the great aim of our endeavours, the conversion of the Chinese nation. But missions have to do with individuals, as well as with nations. Of their effect upon individuals, it is possible to speak more decidedly. Here too, we do not know everything, but from what we do know, I think an impartial judge will agree with your conclusion that "the failure of spiritual results" is sufficiently evident to summon us all to a very serious examination of the whole subject. We must however take some pains to interpret aright, the acknowledged facts. The population of China is estimated conjecturally at four hundred millions. Our tiny band of Christians does not exceed six thousand. Only one believer to every seventy thousand souls ! What an appalling contrast ! Let these innumerable multitudes pass before you in single file, night and day, one hundred in every minute. In one brief hour all the Christians have passed by ; while for eight long years, every day and every night, under the sunlight, and under the solemn stars, the endless procession of the heathen still moves on ; faster than the pulses of your heart, and yet so awfully slow ; will it never end ? Words utterly fail, our imaginations give way in the attempt to conceive of hundreds of millions of souls, and they fail therefore to represent to us the vastness of the disparity between the handful of believers and the multitudes of the unconverted.

But what use shall we make of this overwhelming contrast ? Our Lord has taught us the right, and only right use to be made of such comparisons. "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few ; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." Pray for more labourers ; do not chide those few, toiling under the burden and heat of the day, because they cannot compass the vastness of the field. The most part of these 400,000,000 stand in no closer practical relation to the present missionaries, than do the inhabitants of the planet Jupiter. Three, out of the four hundred millions, have never

been within a hundred miles of the nearest Protestant missionary, have never seen even the outside of a Bible. They live on the same globe with us ; but we are no more responsible for success or failure, so far as they are concerned, than we are for the conversion of the Patagonians. Then the remaining one hundred million—have we any responsibility in connection with these ? Assign one million to each of the hundred Protestant missionaries, it would take him twenty-seven years to give one day's instruction to each, if he took them a hundred at a time. Such calculations are more curious than profitable. There is no room for question, of success or failure, as to those whom the Gospel has never yet reached.

The only method of comparison by which we can reasonably judge of the effects of our teaching, is to ascertain, as nearly as possible, how many persons the missionary *can reach*, how many do actually come within the range of his message. A certain number of people do hear the Gospel, do pay some attention to it, and get to understand its general purport. Compare the conversions with the total of these hearers of the word, and you will have a basis on which to argue. This number cannot be accurately computed, because our hearers do not "take seats," nor become "regular attendants" at our chapels. They are a fitful, ever fluctuating audience ; but nevertheless some rough estimate of their numbers may be made. In this little island of Hong Kong there are three mission-chapels under my charge. If the audiences were counted on each occasion, during one year, and the whole figures were added together, the total would, I am pretty sure, amount to over, rather than under, twenty thousand. There is no means of ascertaining how many of the hearers come only once, and how many repeatedly. But we may safely conclude, that they amount to several thousand persons. Out of these thousands, during the past three years, only nine persons have embraced Christianity. The whole number of our church, after twenty-five years' labour, does not amount to one hundred. 'Thousands hear, and units believe—is not this failure ? In the case of the few who have embraced the Gospel we speak of success. What word shall we employ

to describe our work in its respect to the many, who have heard and believed not, but failure?

Hong Kong is probably the least hopeful mission-station in China. But the general aspect of the work, is much the same from Canton to Peking. In other places there are more converts, but they have been gathered by more missionaries working among denser populations. During the past quarter of a century, millions of Chinese must have heard the preaching of Jesus. Of these millions, only six thousand are now in the Christian Church. For every single convert there must be hundreds, probably thousands of persons, who have had the claims of Christianity pressed home very closely upon them, but who have turned away in indifference. Myriads of Chinese who heard the Gospel twenty years ago, are heathen this day. Failure in so many instances, failure on so vast a scale as this, is not a matter to be lightly passed over. There can be no real gain, in comforting ourselves under present discouragement, by permitting our hopes to run forward, and exult in future hypothetical successes. What our mission may yet achieve, nobody can foretell; but what it has already effected, and what it has failed to effect, are matters we can form some tolerable judgment about. Let us look the stern fact fairly in the face, like brave Christian men, who can bear this, and greater trials to our faith, without being shaken in mind. Let acknowledgment of failure lead us to a searching examination of all the methods of our work, and all the circumstances of the problem, to see if there be any discoverable cause of our slow progress. He who ignores the failure will not be first to find out the remedy.

III.

If failure be admitted, it is natural to inquire, first of all, whether it can be attributed to any defect in the teaching which the missionaries communicate. Should God's ambassadors misrepresent the message entrusted to them, they would have no right to hope for success in their embassy. You have discovered the source of our impotence, in erroneous doctrine upon two points: the future punishment of the lost, and the

second coming of Christ. Both these allegations ought to be seriously examined.

Now it must be confessed, that statements used formerly to be made, as to the certain and inevitable eternal destiny of the greater part of the human race, which are horrible to think of. Were they to form a prominent feature in missionary sermons, the reluctance of the Chinese, to bow to such a system of doctrine, would be not only explicable, but excusable. To teach that the innumerable multitudes of the Chinese people, from their ancestors, who settled on the banks of the Yellow River, four thousand years ago, to those who are dying to-day, without excepting their sages, their virtuous monarchs, their patterns of filial piety, their martyrs to loyalty, their painful searchers after truth, without indeed any discrimination of character, but simply on account of their not having believed in Jesus Christ, are all shut up together in hell, enduring inconceivable torments, and that without hope of escape or cessation through all eternity, is to represent Christianity as the most ghastly, and horrible of all imaginable religions. So far from wondering, that the Chinese should reject it, our wonder is, that any one could ever have been found to believe, and teach it. If this be truth, then truth is more dreadful than the worst lie ever feigned. Better than this, the Chinese popular notion, that men die like the beasts and are no more. Better than this, the metempsychosis, nirvāna, and hells of Buddhism, the worst of which, like Pandora's box, has hope at the bottom. But this is not Christianity, neither is it missionary theology. I do not believe, that among all the missionaries in China, such a theory would find one unflinching adherent. The obnoxious doctrine may, it is true, be found in creeds and catechisms and tracts, which have unfortunately been translated into Chinese. But there are obsolete doctrines in the creeds, as there are obsolete laws in the statute-book. The old form of thought, no doubt, still haunts some minds, though it is not willingly expressed, because no new form has as yet been presented, with sufficient clearness and force, to expel it. You admit yourself, that the advanced theologians of the day, have not been able to agree in any one clear definite substitution for the old theological view of future judgment. It being so among the leaders of

thought at home, some uncertainty and confusion of mind, may be excused among missionaries. As you have openly challenged us for a confession of our faith, and we, of the London Missionary Society, have no recognized standard to point to, I will take this opportunity of declaring my views upon the point, incomplete and unsatisfactory though you may deem them.

I believe that in every nation, he who fears God (though he may call Him Tien or Shangti, and not Jehovah), and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him. I read in my New Testament that, in the great day of account, men will be judged according to their works, not according to their faith; that the test to divide the righteous from the wicked will be brotherly love, not a religious creed. I believe therefore, that acceptance in that day, will not be limited to those who have been baptized and have believed in the atonement. The necessary and inherent immortality of the soul, I have long regarded as a metaphysical speculation, rather than a scriptural doctrine. But the nature and duration of the final punishment of the wicked, still lie shrouded in awful darkness, from my most earnest gaze. God is Love. We know the darkness hides not a fearful spectre, but a merciful Father, from our view. I would not employ my imagination to people that darkness with horrid forms, and ghastly sights, and sounds of terror and of torture. Rather I rejoice to rest in the thought, that Infinite Wisdom and Goodness have boundless resources, wherewith to bring good out of evil, to surpass our hopes and disappoint our alarms. To you, this state of mind will seem very unsatisfactory, for I perceive you "think," that "the doctrine of Heaven and Hell, of Life and Death eternal, are taught in the Bible, with the utmost clearness." I cannot but regret, that you did not devote a page or two, in one of your letters to set forth, at least, the outlines of this doctrine. Many besides myself, would gladly welcome any farther gleam of light shed upon an awfully mysterious subject. Meantime we can but teach what we know, and be silent, where we ourselves are ignorant.

It must have been the heat of controversy, which carried you on to accuse us, of omitting "hell" altogether from our doctrine, and thus depriving the Gospel of that "doctrine of

terror, which is essential to conversion." The fact, the certainty, the fearfulness of future retribution can be preached, and are preached faithfully, by those, who are as yet unable to use precise, definite language, as to the mode of that retribution. The value of this doctrine, as a moral force, consists entirely in the certainty and the justice of the wrath to come. The vagueness as to details, which you complain of, cannot destroy ; to many minds, would rather enhance its power.

One cannot be too thankful, that the glorious doctrine of our Lord's second coming, has recently been restored to its rightful place, in our theology. I can remember when, in the pulpits of the Independents, the individual aspects of the Gospel, were allowed altogether to eclipse the canonical. The duty of saving our own souls was pressed upon us, with such vehement earnestness, that we were hardly permitted, to spare a thought, upon the destinies of the race, the salvation of the world. We owe sincere gratitude to the pre-millenarian school, for their recalling us to more Christian views, to the closer study of the promises of our Lord's return. To the missionary, whose special office it is, to call the heathen from their dumb idols to serve the living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, this doctrine is peculiarly precious. While he toils on through the long black night, casting his net into the waters, but taking nothing ; raising his eyes to the Eastern hills, but seeing no glimmering of dawn above them ; where shall he turn for consolation and strength, but to this truth which shines the morning star of hope upon his soul ? When Christ, the King, shall come in His glory, all shall be well ! What true Christian heart, but will echo John's response, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Nevertheless, we may not be able to follow the reasonings of those, who profess to point out the time approximately, to define at least the position of the event in the world's history, and its circumstances and consequences. Here, however, I maintain, as before, that a certain vagueness in our expectations, neither invalidates the reality of our own faith, nor renders us unfit to use the doctrine, for purposes of instruction. It is the fact, that Christ *will* come to judge the world, and establish His kingdom, which is of vital importance in the Christian creed : the time and manner of the event are of secondary importance.

Any imperfection in our representation of the Gospel, must to some extent, weaken the spiritual power of the Divine message. It becomes therefore, a serious duty, to take a comprehensive survey of the whole system of doctrines preached to the heathen, and to mark the *impact* of these doctrines on the Chinese mind, if it may perchance lead to the detection of defects, which mar our work. If we are trying to build with hay and stubble, no wonder we do not succeed. Careful scrutiny of the facts is necessary for the discovery of any errors of this kind. You appear to have pitched upon the two doctrines above referred to, rather with the intent of impressing your views upon the public mind at home, than because you perceive their special missionary bearing. Practical experience of the work causes me to doubt, whether these doctrines have the fundamental relation to missionary teaching, which you claim for them. All error is prejudicial, but not all equally so. If these things do not come into the direct line of attack and defence, they may have but small share in deciding the contest. They may be our weak points, but if the battle rages in quite another part of the field, weakness here cannot explain our failure. Before the second advent can be so much as discussed, we must have settled that there was a first advent. The heathen refuse to believe in the Christ who did come in humiliation; and consequently the prophecy of His coming in glory, has no interest for them. If you proclaim it with the utmost fervour, it only carries them back to the previous question, whether your declaration of His past coming, is credible. In the same way, our doctrine, that after death, the wicked will be cast into hell, creates no surprise, leads to no anxious questionings; because their faith in existence after death, is too dim and unsubstantial for this. The real point at issue between them and the missionary, is a preliminary one, viz., whether there will be a future life at all; whether any judgment to come, in any shape is to be apprehended: or, more strictly speaking, whether Christians are in possession of a Divine revelation upon these points. If they learned that the Christian teaching condemned all their ancestors, irrespective of character, to the endurance of eternal torments, their instinct and natural affection might well rebel against,

such doctrine. But then neither do the missionaries generally hold such a view as this, nor do the heathen push their inquiries to this point. They have not a sufficiently vivid conviction, that their ancestors are in being at all, to care to enter into curious speculation as to their present situation. This is the more remarkable, because the most frequent and deeply felt of all objections to the Gospel, arises from its bearing on their deceased ancestors. There has never come a single case within my missionary experience, nor have I heard of one from others, in which a Chinese was repelled from Christianity, by its doctrine of future punishment. But they daily object, that our doctrine cuts at the root of filial piety, by forbidding them to sacrifice to the departed. That same filial piety, which guards so jealously these vain superstitions, would certainly lead to opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of hell, if they had any real faith in the continued life of the objects they worship.

The current notions of popular theology must be studied, not only in themselves, but in their relation to our work, in order that we may discover errors, which actually impede our progress. Considering the prominent position the circulation of the Scriptures occupies in our Protestant mission, it might have occurred to you, to examine how the still common notion of verbal inspiration, would affect a Chinaman's mind in the perusal of the sacred book. But the very central doctrine of Christianity, and that which occupies the main position in our teaching, is the doctrine of the Atonement; and I wonder you did not undertake a consideration of the influence of the popular forensic view of this vital tenet upon our mission work. You might well have inquired whether a theory of the Atonement, which seems unable to hold its ground in England, is the best weapon to wield abroad. These things I commend to your consideration. But I will venture here to point out one doctrine of old Calvinistic theology, which appears to me a great obstacle to the reception of the Gospel by the Chinese. I refer to the dogma of Original Sin, as stated, for instance, in the work of President Edwards upon that subject. Now if there is one truth which the Chinese really believe, it is that "human nature is good." More than 2,000 years ago Seun Tsze argued with great vigour for the

opposite opinion. The intermediate view, that human nature is originally neither bad nor good, but indifferent to, and capable of either, has also been eagerly contended for. But the goodness of human nature finally triumphed. The intellect and conscience of the wisest and best of the nation pronounced the verdict, and I am persuaded that no system which attempts to uproot their deepest conviction can succeed in China.

Human nature, says the Chinese, is originally good. No, replies the Calvinist, it is innately and wholly bad. In the words of Whitfield, unregenerate man is "half beast, half devil." I hold with the Chinese, as against Edwards and Whitfield. But whatever be the case with Calvinism, there is no real antagonism between Chinese and Christian doctrine here. The human nature of the Chinese philosophers is *ideal* human nature : *i.e.* human nature in its original divine intention. They mean that if a man accords with the true law of his being he will be good. In other words, that unrighteousness, malevolence, vice, and crime are *unnatural*. The benevolent sages and upright monarchs of antiquity, these are the true ideal men. As for the Chinese Neros and Caligulas, they illustrate the distortion of humanity, not its ideal. In them human nature is well nigh extinct, and they ought almost to be classed among the wild beasts. Who does not see that this doctrine of man's original goodness is not only true, but inestimably precious, the very foundation of all morality? Does not the Bible, too, teach that man was made in the image of God? In this respect Christianity and Chinese philosophy are at one. Farther on they clash. The Confucianist imagines, an inherent power of moral reformation in man, and ascribes an actual attainment of perfection to the sages (which however the sages never claimed for themselves). Here Christian doctrine necessarily diverges; but until we reach this point, there is no necessary collision. The unreflecting translation into Chinese of western theological phrases, which cannot fail to be misunderstood here, is greatly to be regretted. Such technical terms as 'original sin,' 'federal headship,' 'imputation of Adam's guilt,' have but slight scriptural authority to rest upon. Their usefulness in our own theology is questionable: to translate them literally into Chinese, is to provoke misunderstanding and dislike.

It will be patent to you now that I am no apologist for erroneous doctrine. I may therefore meet with some attention when I say that I do not regard error in doctrine as the main cause of our small success. We cannot claim immunity from error, but the whole circumstances of our work are such, as to demand and encourage great simplicity of teaching. At home the most rigid Calvinist, the rankest Arminian, at times lose sight of their distinctive tenets, and preach a gospel so simple and pure, that each could almost adopt the very words of the other. It is opposition which provokes the hardest, most offensive expressions of doctrine on all sides. Now here, in the missionary field, our teachings are for the most part elementary, and we have neither time nor inclination to quit the common battle, and turn our arms against each other. The being and fatherhood of God, the sin of idolatry, the sinfulness of sin, the gift of a Saviour, the facts of our Lord's life, His dying for our sins, His ascension, mediation, and return to judgment; repentance, faith, the promise of the Spirit, the nature of Christian worship and Christian life, these are the doctrines which you will hear insisted on most frequently in missionary sermons: and that without much use of technical theological expressions. It is these vital truths of Christianity, taken altogether as a system, that our hearers reject or neglect. If there were one doctrine of Christianity so especially obnoxious to the Chinese mind, that they very commonly stumbled at it, and rejected the Gospel on this account, such doctrine could hardly remain undiscovered by a hundred missionaries, coming constantly into contact with so many thousands of heathen. Our experience however is, speaking generally, not that they dislike this or that in Christianity, but that the Gospel, as a whole, possesses no commanding power over their faith. We must therefore search for the causes of our failure elsewhere than in our system of doctrine.

Some may perhaps be inclined to ascribe the poverty of our achievements, to the unheroic character of the modern missionary. Far be it from me to provoke the proverb, "It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest," upon my head. We are more than sufficiently reviled already, by malignant spirits, who take delight in heaping cruel slanders upon us, which

however are happily for the most part so evidently exaggerated, that they carry their own refutation with them. If illustrious scholars, acute philosophers, splendid geniuses, are rare in our ranks, I am bold to say that we are a respectable, faithful, and laborious body of working clergy. We are not the *élite*, the mental aristocracy of the ministry, neither are we the dregs. Silly extravagances of eulogium have been pronounced upon us at missionary meetings, and before Sunday schools, as though we were worthy to be ranked with apostles and martyrs of old ; but this unmerited eulogy is not farther from the truth on the one side, than are the unkind caricatures, drawn by two of our most popular novelists on the other. Spite of the dictum of a noble duke, missionaries are neither knaves nor enthusiasts. I could wish indeed we were a little more open to the latter charge ; but a more sober-minded, and hard-working class of men it would be difficult to find. Yet when full justice has been done to missionaries, one must admit, that there is yet something to be desired. Extraordinary enterprises demand extraordinary men ; while the rank and file of the clergy (dare I utter it) are apt to be just a little narrow-minded, and slow to recognize the differing requirements of new circumstances. But if the churches joyfully consecrated their choicest spirits to the most arduous undertaking, and could be content with the meaner men for their own edification, even then the necessities of the case might call for something higher still. The past great epochs in the history of the human race have always been associated with the names of great men, who embodied the spirit of the new age into which they led their emancipated followers. Paul leads the van of missionary work. Patrick in Ireland, Columba in Scotland, Boniface in Germany, Ulfilas among the Goths ; these are men who have left deep footprints on the sands of time. The Reformation required Luther ; the revival in England, Wesley. The gospel sword has not lost its edge, but perhaps the hand that wields it lacks vigour. Our Protestant mission in China waits for the appearance of its hero.

It is, however, our humility which suggests that the want of success may be partly owing to missionary inferiority. The cause I am now about to bring forward is no hypothesis

but a real and unquestionable hindrance to our progress, which most of those who have practical acquaintance with the facts will set down as *the* hindrance, by its magnitude casting all others into the shade, and sufficient alone, to account for a more complete failure than ours has been. I mean, of course, the influence of our national policy, and the evil example of so-called Christians. Modern missions have a national aspect. The Chinese hear that England is a Christian nation, and they look for the embodiment of Christianity in the acts of the State. To their minds religion and politics are not two mutually independent and irresponsible fields of action. The Anti-State-Church theory has not yet dawned upon their horizon. In their view the first purpose of religion is to secure a wise, upright, and benevolent government. Confucianism begins with the State, and only through its influence hopes for the reformation of the people. In its scheme the sovereign is heaven's vicegerent ; and then only is the true ideal attained, when the sovereign is also the sage. Imbued with these ideas they naturally criticize a foreign religion through its influence upon the foreign government. Is your religion better than ours, then your national policy must be better? Unfortunately their conclusion, from this line of argument, is altogether unfavourable to Christianity. The gospel of free-trade, of free-trade even in opium, the doctrine that might makes right, have been preached to China eloquently enough by British guns. But any higher morality, any more excellent religion, they have failed to see in our national dealings with them. The history is open for any one to read it. I know that many excellent persons defend our government throughout ; they look upon the unhappy collisions with China as the inevitable consequence of the contact of a higher with a lower civilization. They deplore the misfortune, but deny our culpability. They urge, with reason and truth, that the Chinese began this national intercourse with feelings of insolent contempt for the outer barbarian ; and that absurd pride, obstinate bigotry, and frequent perfidy, have characterised their side of it all along. It is not, however, my business now to hold the balances between the two nations. I have only to do with the unpleasant but incontrovertible fact, that the issue of a century of intercourse, so far from recommending

Christianity to the Chinese, has been to accumulate a feeling of intense, deep-rooted prejudice against it. Similarly, I decline here to enter into an examination of the reasonableness of the Chinese dislike to foreigners in their private capacities. Race antipathies are for the most part founded on mutual misconception. I am confident that, take us all in all, we are not so bad as the Chinese think us. A heathen people is ready enough to reverse the rule of Christian charity, and think all the evil of others it can. Nevertheless they do think very badly of us, and no candid mind can deny that they have considerable excuse for thinking so. The vices of the foreigner are patent to every Chinese, while our virtues for the most part abide in the shade and escape his observation. Our immoralities, love of money, luxuriousness, arrogant contempt for the inferior races we come into contact with ; these the Chinese are familiar with : and the evil that is, in reality, only the guilt of some is too easily, by unfriendly minds, suspected to exist in all. Thus their opinion of foreigners, partly unjust though it is, created an almost impassable barrier in the way of their reception of our religion. It is proverbial among missionaries, that the nearer one is to the great emporiums of foreign trade, the harder is the work of spreading the Gospel. Hong Kong, a British colony, is by many degrees a less favourable soil for the Gospel than Canton, where the foreigners are very few, and Canton city has been far less fruitful than districts like Pokloh, where no white-face is ever seen but that of the missionary. When these things have been duly weighed, the Chinese rejection of Christianity will, to many persons, seem fully accounted for.

Not all however will think thus. There are those, whose faith in the Gospel is so strong that they expect to see it triumph, in spite of the imperfections of its real and nominal friends, and the hostility of avowed foes. If this triumph is not achieved, farther examination of the whole case seems called for. I will therefore venture to state a difficulty, which appears to me both real and formidable. I do so diffidently and reluctantly, because, so far as I am aware, the very existence of this difficulty has never been publicly recognized, and because its statement opens the way for questions of the

gravest and most momentous nature. But truth is not served by concealment of difficulties.

Imagine now that there were a Chinese living in London, who had been resident there long enough to become familiar with our language, literature, and national life ; and that to you was allotted the task of trying to make him a Christian. At the outset of your undertaking, you would find that he had of his own accord abandoned the idolatry and superstitions of his native land. He would also readily acknowledge the excellence of the Christian religion. On being pressed for a reason why he did not embrace Christianity, he might tell you, that he considered all religions to be good, but that he could not see that absolute truth, Divine authority, imperative claim on our adherence, are possessed by, or at least proved, on behalf of any. There are many persons in Europe who hold that opinion, and it would not be an unnatural refuge for the Chinaman in the supposed circumstances. Mere contact with a higher civilization has sufficed to dissipate his old superstitious notions ; but mere contact with Christianity has not sufficed to beget a living faith in its divinity. The *onus probandi* would therefore fall on you. The great question would arise, how shall I convince this man of the Divine authority of the Christian faith ? You could not expect him to receive so solemn a truth, fraught with such awful consequences, on your mere assertion. You would feel bound to lay evidence before him ; evidence sufficient to justify, nay, to demand his faith. The evidences of Christianity may be variously treated ; but I think whatever arguments you might adduce could be referred to one of three heads : the historical evidences, the internal evidences, and the effects of Christianity. You might commence by inviting him to a study of Christian doctrine ; its perfect morality, its sublime theology, its adaptation to human wants, its remedy for the past and its hope for the future. You would entreat him to study Christianity in Christ, Himself the embodiment of His teaching. Then you might appeal to the blessed effects of Christianity, both in the cases of individuals, and also in its influence for good upon society in general. And also you would lay stress on that chain of historical evidences, which brings us into relation with the eye-witnesses of those great transactions,

which are the foundation of the Christian faith. You could not dispense with this last. Christianity is founded upon the supernatural. If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain. The author of *Ecce Homo* postulates miracles. Without them, how shall we listen to *Ecce Deus*? If the facts of the Gospel be not facts, then the whole Christian system remains an inexplicable phenomenon ; grand, beautiful, beneficent ; but a mystery as to its origin and real nature, and destitute of power to command allegiance. The historical argument therefore is of essential importance. If you succeed in convincing him here you may not even then succeed in making him a Christian : but if you fail here, you ought not to make him one.

Let us now shift the scene from London to China. It is no longer trying to convert one isolated oriental with the whole authority of Christendom to back you. Here you may see one solitary Christian missionary labouring in the midst of an almost boundless horizon of unbroken heathenism. The enterprise seems hopeless, but it is not really so. That one unsupported voice, speaking in the might of truth, will awaken echoes even among the dead. Spite of the *vis inertiae* of the immense mass of heathenism opposed to him, his attacks upon it soon make some impression. He batters the fortress of idolatry, until it begins to crumble and fall beneath repeated shocks. So far his work is encouraging. A good many persons are brought to the state of mind your London friend is supposed to have reached spontaneously. They cease to defend idolatry, and if they do not abandon the cherished customs of their forefathers, they practise them only in deference to the opinion of the multitude. So far they are brought, but no farther. We demolish the walls of the fortress, but we are not strong enough to take it by assault. Their old beliefs are shattered, but they dwell unconquered among the ruins. Pass now in review the arguments you were supposed to bring to bear upon the Chinese in London, and consider how far they are available for our purposes here. You would expect the moral excellence of Christianity alone to demonstrate its divinity. But it does not : and why? We can only quote St. Paul : "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Truth shines by its own

light, but it requires a purged eye to receive its rays. Such exposition as the missionaries have been able to give of the moral beauty, grandeur, and benefits of Christian truth, have not availed to induce the vast majority of our hearers to embrace Christianity. A superficial attention to our teachings gains for the doctrine a degree of respect and admiration ; but this does not imply the acknowledgment of its unique excellence. It may be that, in a system of truth like the Christian religion, the mind requires to be satisfied about the facts, before it is in a fitting state to give to the doctrines the calm, undisturbed attention, which will reveal their intrinsic excellence.

If we find then that the argument from the internal excellence of our faith does not bring our hearers to a decision, to what shall we turn ? Shall we say, “a tree is known by its fruits ;” see now the blessed and glorious effects of this religion in Christian nations ? Alas ! the Chinese perpetually turn this argument against us. Instead of our being able to command their belief in Christianity on this ground, they continually taunt us with the proverb, “ Physician ! heal thyself.”

We are then driven back upon the historical evidences. We proclaim the Gospel, as Peter did in Jerusalem, appealing to the evidence of our Lord’s resurrection. But we do this at a distance of eighteen hundred years, with nothing to bridge over the vast gulf which separates the Chinese of the nineteenth century from the crowds who gathered at the feast of Pentecost. Can you realize the position ? A stranger from the unknown west addresses a Chinese crowd, asserting that certain facts, intimately related to their everlasting welfare, occurred in Judea eighteen centuries ago. Is it within reason to expect that the Chinese audience should at once accept his bare assertion ? It is clear that the Chinese, if they are beings constituted with minds like our own, must desiderate evidence which we are not in a position to give them. We are engaged in the effort to propagate Christianity *outside its historical basis, and apart from its historical evidences.*

I have stated this difficulty nakedly. Some modification must be made in order to arrive at a true and exact conception of the case. The solitary missionary must be multi-

plied into a half-dozen, or a score. The Chinese, too, know that Christianity is our national religion; and thus the testimony of the individuals is confirmed by the tradition of the nation. They also begin to apprehend that the foreigners are divided into distinct nations, holding one common faith. The relics of Nestorianism and the presence of Roman Catholicism also afford us independent witness. But all these things are very dimly apprehended, if not altogether unknown, to the great mass of the people. They know nothing of history, nothing of geography, nothing of foreign nations or churches. You may form a conception of our position by imagining the case reversed. Suppose that Christianity had been first promulgated in extreme eastern Asia, Jesus had been born in Shantung; and that a company of ten or twelve Chinese or Japanese were now in London, proclaiming him as the Son of God and only Saviour of men. You, being by supposition a heathen, a worshipper of the gods, or a philosopher of the schools, happen to encounter one of these strange preachers, announcing his marvellous story to a crowd in Hyde Park. If you were patient enough to listen to the end, and candid enough to give a little serious thought to the matter, would you not feel that such extraordinary occurrences, involving such tremendous consequences, were being presented to you on very slight evidence? Who knows this Chinaman? you would say, and granting that he is an honest well-meaning person, who can say that the traditions of his country may not have misled him as to facts which he says happened during the time of the early Roman Emperors, indeed very little time after Julius Cæsar invaded Britain? If you were to examine his doctrine carefully, comparing it with the established idolatries, and the current philosophies, you might see reason to embrace it, but the question is, would you, under the circumstances, feel called upon to give it such an examination?

When we are searching for causes of missionary failure, this feature of the missionary problem should at least not be left altogether out of sight. It appears to me, that our weakness does not lie in the region of theology, but in that of evidences.

IV.

My object in this letter is not to solve, but to state the missionary problem. A correct statement of a difficulty is the first step towards a solution. Some practical acquaintance with the work emboldens me to essay this first step. May others go far beyond the reach of my feeble powers, and by an inspiration from above, guide us to the right conclusion !

The only remedies which I have seen proposed, are your own ; viz., an improved missionary theology, which I have already commented on ; and another, which assumes that we only lack one thing, "the outpouring of the Spirit." Pious minds hope that the Spirit of God will be poured out upon the heathen, and by an immediate supernatural agency render missionary preaching effectual. Undoubtedly if such be the Lord's will it shall be so. In His awful presence it becomes us to speak with bated breath. But in indulging such hopes we can have no warrant save that given by the Holy Book. I may therefore dare to say that I read nothing of such an outpouring upon the heathen in the New Testament. I read there, that the gift of the Spirit is the promise given to faith. The Spirit was poured out first on the apostles and believers at Jerusalem, and the manifestation of His presence among them was the power which led three thousand to believe, to whom St. Peter held out the hope of receiving the Spirit as the result of their faith. All the New Testament teaching on the subject seems to be in accordance with this first effusion of the new and distinguishing gift of the Christian dispensation. We may well long and pray for an outpouring of the Spirit ; but it should be that He may descend upon ourselves and the churches. When the heathen witness the signs of His presence among us, there is good reason to hope they will be awed to solemn anxiety by the sight, and led to crave the same sacred boon for themselves.

A contemporary writer says, "to ask men to believe is to call on them for the very greatest act of which they are capable, and the most tremendous for which they will have to give account." If this be true, then he who summons another to believe, should be prepared to give him strong and sound reasons for it. This brings up two most important

and at the same time, perplexing questions. The first is an ethical question : On what evidence *ought* a man to believe ? The second is a practical one : On what evidence *will* he believe ? The two should of course coincide in one reply, but practically I fear the answers are not always identical. It is the latter question which immediately presses on our attention. How may we best win the Chinese to faith in the Gospel ?

Were the Apostles and primitive Christians now labouring in the cities of China, as formerly they did in the old Roman empire, I cannot doubt that they would achieve similar successes. There is no assignable reason why the Gospel, preached with apostolic fervour, attested by eye-witnesses of its facts, and confirmed by mighty signs and wonders following, should not repeat in this land its early triumphs. Modern missionaries are neither apostles, eye-witnesses, nor workers of miracles. Here the question naturally suggests itself, Why have we no miracles now ? The usual answer is, that miracles are needed to establish a religion ; once established they are no longer necessary. They are but the scaffolding, to be taken down when the temple is erected. It may be so ; but this is a plea for, not against, the repetition of miracles in China. We have here to introduce and establish Christianity in an entirely new region, to which the ancient miracles, and the whole history of Christendom, are as though they had not been ; according to the legal maxim, *de non existentibus et non apparentibus eadem est ratio*. Lately it has become the fashion to speak of miracles as though they never were an important factor in Christianity. The internal evidences are regarded as alone truly valuable. And the argument from miracles is slighted as almost superfluous. Yet Christ said, " If I had not done among them the works that none other man did, they had not had sin." If the supernatural is of small account as evidence, what shall we say of the supernatural element interwoven with the very texture of the gospel history, and forming the basis of its doctrines ? Reject the miraculous ; then Christianity, as represented in the Apostles' Creed, is a delusion ; and Biland's shot was almost justifiable. The Christianity we preach cannot dispense with its original Divine attestations, as recorded in the Scriptures ;

and therefore if it should seem good to the Divine Wisdom to renew such manifestations in these latter days, there would be no incongruity between them and our doctrine. Merely to suggest such a possibility may shock some good people. Their minds are so completely cowed by the scientific scepticism of the age, that they disbelieve the possibility of any supernatural signs, in these days of steam and electricity, almost as fervently as they believe in their actual occurrence in Judea long ago. The iron hand of modern science has now got a firm grip of the whole material universe, so that Almighty God cannot find anywhere a single atom of loose matter which He can move of His own free will. Some faint shadow of liberty is still allowed Him in the sphere of spiritual phenomena, but science is ominously stretching her long cold arm in that direction also. There is one thing to admire in these tendencies of scepticism, and that is their consistent development. First, there can be no miracles; then there can be no living personal Deity; and now we can hear the threatenings of the coming decree, that man must no longer consider himself as a spiritual being, but take his place in the first rank of the brutes. Let us be as consistent in our faith, and place no bounds to our Omnipotent Father, save those which His own Omniscience assumes. While however we firmly believe in God's power to attest His word to-day by like signs and wonders to those wrought of old; it does not follow that we should confidently expect, still less presumptuously demand them. Our puny minds cannot judge when is the fitting occasion for the Lord of the universe to depart from the ordinary methods of His providence. But if the thought begets a wish, and the wish breathes itself heavenward in a prayer, always in submission to His superior wisdom, who shall blame the petitioner?

I can conceive of the Gospel triumphing gloriously in China without any miracle, if it were at all worthily commended by the lives of its professed followers. Let Christianity be exemplified to the eyes of the Chinese by the nations and the individuals that bear its name, and farther evidence could hardly be necessary. If not only strict justice, but a magnanimous forbearance and Christian mercy to the weak, were

the prevailing characteristics of our governments ; if the opium-trade were abandoned ; if our merchants and other residents in the east were conspicuous, not only for their courage and truthfulness, but for their gentle and meek spirit, their brotherly feeling toward their dependents, their earnest desire to win them to Christ, their evident preference for the treasure in heaven, over any earthly gain ; if our soldiers and sailors were remarkable for their freedom from drunkenness and hatred of uncleanness ; if these things were, the conversion of China could not be far off. I fear the mere mention of such a moral miracle as this, will make a greater strain on the faith of the reader, than the possible revival of physical miracles has made. But with God all things are possible. It is well for us to bear continually in mind that every improvement in this respect is another link in the evidence required, to win the Chinese to faith in the Gospel.

It may seem a tame conclusion, but I believe it is the true one, that until farther discoveries are made, the immediate duty of the Christian church is to go on doing what she is doing now, only with greater vigour, self-denial, and earnestness. I am no fanatical believer in missionary societies, but I think they are doing a good work. I should be glad if some talented reformer would show us all a better way, but until he has arisen, our wisest course is to persevere in the present path, only pressing forward with more zeal and walking more warily. It is highly desirable that the standard of missionary character should be raised ; but there is no good reason for despising the services of ordinary men, while waiting for the appearance of the extraordinary. One hero might be worth a hundred of us meaner souls. But heroes are born, not made. You may lawfully demand of us that we shall be good : I know not by what reason you can expect us to be also great. A missionary can no more reasonably be required to rival St. Paul, than Demosthenes or Milton. It is really asking too much of directors of missionary societies, that they should provide you apostles in return for guinea subscriptions. We must look higher than to Blomfield Street for a St. Paul for China. Meanwhile it may be well to do more of what we can do. You speak sceptically of “the idea that a few hundreds of additional missionaries will hasten the conversion of

Asia to the belief of the Gospel." I have already protested against the idea that the conversion of Asia is the work for which the Christian church is immediately responsible. Our accountability ends when we have given to Asia the opportunity of being converted. Our duty being to preach the Gospel to every creature, a few hundreds of additional missionaries would hasten the performance of our allotted task very materially. Moreover, though nothing multiplied a hundredfold is nothing still, the most humble and cautious estimate of the results of our work cannot quite reduce it to zero. Something has been achieved, and increased numbers may multiply that to something more. It does not follow that if one missionary wins no converts, a thousand will win none. The thousand would witness to a good degree of faith and zeal in the churches sending them, while the one only made their lack of interest in the work more conspicuous. And numbers of themselves carry weight. I have already pointed out the prime importance of the national aspect of our work. Large bodies of missionaries would at least serve to convince the Chinese that the so-called Christian nations believed in their religion very heartily themselves. If to every countryman of ours coming to China to make money there, were another coming to spend it, and himself too, for their conversion, the Chinese would see that at least Englishmen cared as much for the Gospel as they do for dollars ; and I question whether a miracle would astonish and impress them more. At present the poverty and insignificance of the scale on which missions are carried on in China, compared with the wealth, power, and energy of the British nation, can only lead intelligent Chinese to think that the Gospel has very few adherents in England, or that they feel their obligations very lightly.

In conclusion : I send forth this letter painfully aware of its incompleteness. Somebody has said of Archbishop Whately that he was quite content if he could send down his plummet a few fathoms deeper than anybody else, and seemed not to care whether he really got to the bottom of a subject or not. I have sent my plummet down to the full length of my line. I know it has not reached the bottom, and I am intensely affected by the suspense. I appeal to you and

to all, to cast out your leads once more and reach soundings for us ; if we be not indeed sounding the unfathomable. At least, I have done what I could. May the effort be accepted of Him in whose sight all things are clear, to whom belong both the secret and the revealed !

I am, my dear sir,

Yours sincerely,

F. S. TURNER.

to the fact that the great mass of the people
are not yet fully educated and that the
state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the

people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that

the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the

people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that

the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the

people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that

the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the
people are not yet fully educated and that
the state of the country is such that the

